

THE CHURCH THAT JESUS BUILT

Daily Briefing • Day 1 of 5 • Wise in Your Own Eyes

WEEKLY MEMORY VERSE

By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.
John 13:35

Sunday we looked at the churches Jesus threatened to shut down and the church Jesus added people to daily. Today we look at a key difference: whether you are more likely to trust the apostles' teaching in the New Testament over modern culture and man-made traditions. You can watch or listen to the sermon at 1mso.church or on the One Missoula app.

OPENING PRAYER

Heavenly Father, I commit myself to the teaching, insight, and wisdom You gave us in Your Word. I pray that I would put Your Word over man-made tradition as well as the wisdom of my culture. Help me not get swept up in man-made religion or cultural norms all around me. I commit myself to You in the name of Jesus. Amen.

TODAY'S TEACHING

People looking for truth are frequently drawn to either modern culture or established tradition: whatever is newest, or whatever is oldest. Someone checking out church, faith, or religion might look at ancient sects or denominations and assume they must be closer to the truth simply because the tradition comes from a distant, bygone era. Someone else assumes the opposite, that whatever is newest and most current must be the most advanced, enlightened, or progressive. Both instincts have a track record, and both track records are bad. Culture's track record includes relational carnage, financial stress, addiction, brokenness, misery, depression, anxiety, fear, and worry. Tradition's track record includes division, violence, and rigid loyalty to flawed human leaders. Sunday we looked at the church Jesus kept adding to, and the text named the apostles' teaching as a driving factor over both culture and tradition. Today we look at why neither one holds up against Scripture.

Start with culture's wisdom, because what's popular and trendy rarely sounds foolish while you're inside it, imbibing it day in and day out. Paul says God made foolish the wisdom of the world (1 Corinthians 1:20). He says the Cross itself looks like nonsense to people who are perishing, while looking like the very power of God to people being saved (1 Corinthians 1:18). Human wisdom has already been tried, culture after culture, generation after generation. The result is never freedom. It is devastation, pain, and suffering, every time. Whatever your culture arrogantly decrees as obviously true and enlightened has almost certainly been tried before under a different name, and found wanting.

Tradition works the same way, just aimed at the past instead of the present. Jesus confronted the Pharisees and the scribes on this directly. They had taken their own accumulated customs and set them above the actual commandment of God. Jesus names the problem in plain terms: "You leave the commandment of God and hold to the tradition of men" (Mark 7:8). Then He goes further, calling it a fine way of rejecting God's command in order to keep their own tradition intact (Mark 7:9). The age of the manmade tradition was never the issue. An old tradition can be just as wrong as a new opinion, and Jesus treats both as rivals that answer to His Word rather than the other way around.

None of this makes tradition worthless. Two thousand years of Christians who walked with God before you are worth learning from (Hebrews 13:7). The key is submission. Their example gets read and weighed against the New Testament, never the other way around. The moment a tradition, even a good one, starts governing how you read Scripture, it has taken a seat it was never given.

Which brings us back to how the apostles' teaching governed the church Jesus built rather than culture or tradition. The apostles' teaching was the eyewitness testimony of the men who walked with Jesus, saw His sinless life, saw His power over demons, disease, and death, watched Him die, and saw Him risen. That testimony is now available to you as the New Testament. Every claim culture makes and every claim tradition makes has to answer to that Spirit-inspired Scripture.

1 Corinthians 1:18-21

For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. ¹⁹For it is written, 'I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart.' ²⁰Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? ²¹For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe.

Mark 7:6-9

And he said to them, "Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written, 'This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; ⁷in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.' ⁸You leave the commandment of God and hold to the tradition of men." ⁹And he said to them, "You have a fine way of rejecting the commandment of God in order to establish your tradition!"

Read 1 Corinthians 1:18-21 and notice what God says about the wisdom of the wise and the discernment of the discerning. Notice what He says He has done to the wisdom of this world. Then read Mark 7:6-9 and notice Jesus never asks how old the Pharisees' tradition was. He condemned them for what it replaced.

REFLECT

Reminder: honest introspection and Scripture-informed self-assessment are far more beneficial than self-delusion and wishful thinking.

Our modern, technologically advanced, enlightened, and progressive culture is nothing more than the next iteration of the wisdom of this world.

What ideas do your friends, coworkers, family, or culture currently treat as obviously true and enlightened which might actually be the kind of wisdom God has already called foolish?

Fill in the blank from 1 Corinthians 1:20:

"Has not God made foolish the _____ of the world?" (1 Corinthians 1:20)

*These fill-in-the-blank questions use the ESV text. Your Bible may use different words for the same idea.

Culture after culture has run the experiment of human wisdom, ethics, and morality. The result is never freedom. It is devastation, pain, and suffering. Culture in our generation is proving to be no different.

Where have you followed what modern culture says is best and consequently suffered pain you could have avoided by walking according to the Bible's teaching instead?

Pivoting to tradition now, Jesus told the Pharisees they had replaced God's actual command with their own tradition, and He called it a fine way of rejecting His commandments.

Where do you place preference on something simply because it is ancient or historic, a denomination, a movement, a theological school, without asking whether old ideas are just as capable of being wrong as new ones?

Culture and tradition both feel safer than they actually are, one because it is loud and popular, the other because it is established and venerated.

Which one actually has more authority over your decisions this week, the apostles' teaching, or one of the two rivals? Do some honest introspective self-assessment before moving on.

PRAYER

Write your prayer or pray out loud. As we've read, God's ear is not dull. Talk to Him like He is listening and wants to hear from you.

MEMORY VERSE

Write or recite John 13:35 from memory:
